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ABSTRACT

This report describes an assessment of four training demonstration projects designed to create or promote innovative strategies and approaches within community colleges and universities to provide training and employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged Hispanics. The programs targeted individuals of Hispanic origin eligible for programs authorized by the Job Training Partnership Act. Findings from the assessment indicated that all four programs had a strong case management component. Two programs supported students while they attended existing educational programs in the college. The other two were dedicated certification or degree programs targeting disadvantaged Hispanics. The four programs all provided academic support in the form of tutors, and sometimes, peer mentors. Student-focused program design was important for student success. Continuous and extensive relations with employers and industry provided numerous benefits to students. Four policy recommendations emerged from these case analyses: offering comprehensive case management, promoting student-focused instructional practice, designing student-friendly training programs, and creating links to industry and employers. Detailed case studies of each program are included. (Contains 33 references.) (SM)

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Community Development Research Center

Opening Doors for Hispanics: An Assessment of the HACU-ETA Demonstration Project

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Edwin Meléndez

Principal Investigator

Executive Summary

In this study, we conducted an assessment and collected data on four training demonstration projects funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and developed in collaboration with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. The projects aimed to create or promote innovative strategies and approaches within community colleges and universities to provide training and employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged Hispanics. These programs targeted individuals of Hispanic origin eligible for programs authorized by the Job Training Partnership Act. The US Employment and Training Administration, the administrative agency for the demonstration grant, awarded grants to four programs:

- The Hispanic Network for Education and Training of the Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute of New Mexico (ATVI).
- The Better Opportunities for Hispanics Program of the Miami Dade Community College, Homestead Campus of Florida (MDCC).
- The Direct Care Workers Program at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York. (BMCC), and
- The Accelerated Associate's Program for Licensed Nurses of the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico (IAUPR).

Findings

The most important commonality among the four programs is that they all had a strong case management component. The programs at MDCC and ATVI were primarily designed to support students while they were attending existing educational programs in the college. MDCC created a dedicated program with its own counseling and an emphasis in fostering group identity for program participants. In contrast, ATVI relied on staff from existing counseling services, and focused on linking each individual student to the particular academic or social support service needed. The IUPR and BMCC programs were dedicated certification or degree programs targeting disadvantaged Hispanics. In these later cases, case management, counseling, financial aid, and other support services were well integrated into the programs. Regardless of how the case management component was structured, students benefited from having a person or persons responsible for mediating the interactions between the students and the demands of the institution. This student-focused support system seems to have played a critical role in students' satisfaction with the programs and in fostering their success in college.

A second common element among the demonstration projects was the provision of academic support in the form of tutors, and in some cases, student peer mentors. Academic support played a mayor role in students' success in completing courses and finishing the programs because many participating students could not have taken college-level courses without receiving continuous academic support. Many had to take non-credit remedial courses before entering the regular academic program. Hence, programs serving the disadvantaged are more successful when they provide a strong academic support system for students, when student-focused instructional practices are incorporated into the program, and when faculty takes a more proactive role in the mentoring of students.

Student-focused program design is important for student success. All four programs tried to schedule services and classes to accommodate students' circumstances. By and large, the staff of these programs worked as a team providing needed services, and generally were very aware of the many barriers in students' progress. Most of the program also offered flexibility in credit transfers. All these and other components of program design have a cumulative effect on students' success. The greatest contrast in this area of comparison is the "dedicated" program design (IUPR and BMCC) versus the "integration" program design (MDCC and ATVI). Dedicated programs have more influence over curriculum design and faculty participation in the program. They are also more successful fostering group identity and promoting solidarity among students. Dedicated programs also develop closer links to industry and employers. On the other hand, programs that promote the integration of students into regular college courses have an advantage over dedicated programs in terms of opening existing support services at the college to students and in offering a more diverse set of educational options. In our case studies the institutionalization of the demonstration project proceeded better when the programs received the support and commitment of the college or the support of the university executive leadership. Design was not a particularly determinant factor in the continuation of the program.

Continuous and extensive relations with employers and industry provided numerous benefits to students. Employers' participation in curriculum design insured that course content was in alignment with industry standards and focused on the competencies most in demand by the local job market. The students who participated in internships gained valuable learning experiences that related classroom learning to the world of work. Generally, students' transition to permanent employment benefited from the program efforts to build the bridges to industry.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Four policy recommendations emerged from our analysis of the case studies.

Offer comprehensive case management

Community Colleges or University programs serving non-traditional students should promote comprehensive case management that takes into account the multiple barriers affecting the academic success of students with socio-economic or educational disadvantages. These strategies should also consider the strengths that Hispanics bring to their college experience such as group identity and ethnic solidarity.

Promote student-focussed instructional practice.

It is imperative that community colleges focus attention on improving instructional practices and promote student-focused pedagogies. A well-trained instructor uses culturally and socially relevant methods. Since students prefer active learning, teachers must engage students in active learning. Effective teachers are also engaged with students as active mentors, and by looking at students' learning experience as a multidimensional process affected by social, cultural, and non-academic factors.

Design student-friendly training programs

Community colleges should design programs that accommodate the time constraints and learning styles of disadvantaged Hispanics. Dedicated programs seem to provide a more supportive learning environment for disadvantaged Hispanics. Dedicated programs also encourage faculty to be more involved in counseling, mentoring, and in promoting relations with industry. Short-term training should be a step towards a college degree. Whether courses are approved or competencies are learned in a community-based organization or a community college, all training should be credited towards a certification, and all certifications should be credited towards a college degree. For students with limited English-language proficiency, in the context of US-based community college, contextual and vocational English asn a Second Language (ESL) should be an integral program component.

Create links to industry and employers

Community colleges with strong connections to employers enhance the learning experiences and employment opportunities of participating students. In these colleges curriculum and resources are more synchronized to technological change and the skills demanded by industry. We believe that effective community college-based technical training programs are more effective when they are closely linked and connected to employers and industry.

Introduction

This report takes its place among a growing number of studies seeking to understand how community colleges and universities can enhance the employment opportunities of disadvantaged populations. By now, it is generally accepted in the field of employment training that students and job-seekers need both job-specific skills and connections to employers to get an entry-level job or to advance to a better job. Successful job-training programs provide job seekers with skills demanded by industry. These programs have institutionalized relations with employers that facilitate job placement and the transition to work—they are successful "matchmakers" (Meléndez and Harrison, 1998; Harrison and Weiss, 1998). Given recent changes in both welfare and employment training policy, the question of the appropriate role for community colleges in training the disadvantaged is receiving renewed attention.

The enactment of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) in 1996 had a tremendous impact on the field of employment training. Welfare-to-work initiatives emphasized short-term employability training following a "work-first" strategy. This strategy assumes that work experience is the most important factor leading to stable permanent employment. Recent research and various reports suggest that programs that emphasize the "connections" to the job market have expanded in recent years (Dresser and Rogers, 1998; Molina, 1998; Seavy, 1998; Siegel and Kwas, 1995). Community-based organizations, community colleges, and numerous employer-based or industry-based initiatives have rushed to expand or create programs that assist in the transition to work.

Providing employment training to disadvantaged populations has been very difficult, as the recent experience with "work-first" initiatives have demonstrated. Although many of the short-term employability programs have succeeded in placing job applicants in entry-level jobs, a substantial number of job seekers have taken low-paid jobs with relatively little opportunity for career advancement. Many others drop-out of the labor force after a short period of employment, and, even worse, many face too many barriers to employment to be able to be successfully served by existing programs. In addition to employers' often-biased perceptions and often-discriminatory behavior, lack of job connections and transportation, many disadvantaged students face the perennial and fundamental problem of lack of skills—particularly such basic academic skills as reading, writing, math, and a general understanding of computers.

There are two different types of institutional skill-training programs, each with its particular set of strengths and weaknesses. Community-based organizations, for instance, have strong connections to targeted populations in need of services and, in most cases, are better situated to offer social services and connections to support systems. But these programs often fail to have strong connections to employers or educational institutions, and have great difficulty in keeping up with new technologies and pedagogy (Grubb, 1996). In contrast, industry-based programs have strong connections to employers and can understand and react faster to changes in the skill competencies required given the technological changes affecting the workplace. Employer

or industry-based programs, however, often lack the connections to disadvantaged populations and prefer applicants who are more likely to succeed in a training program and who can adapt with more success to a new working environment.

It is in the above context that we can understand the renewed interest in the role that community colleges and universities can play in the emerging re-alignment of workforce development institutions. Community colleges have traditionally served as the educators of non-traditional and disadvantaged populations. To various degrees, they provide technical certifications in response to demand in local labor markets while providing a foundation of core academic competencies for those who would like to pursue a college degree. In urban areas where community colleges have become an effective coordinating mechanism for workforce development, they have strong working relationships with both social service agencies and employers. They have become an integral part of a comprehensive system of skills training that effectively provides both social and academic support to those who need it the most. And, after trainees complete their training, these colleges have the necessary connections to industry to place them in entry-level jobs within a chosen career path. However, very few community colleges serving the inner city poor have reached their full potential as regional workforce development intermediaries. Often, community colleges are viewed as preparatory schools for universities offering a traditional liberal arts curriculum to students who plan to transfer to four-year colleges. In many cases they offer only a few programs in which industry plays a major role in design, development, and support.

Fortunately the two objectives, that of responding to the educational needs of disadvantaged populations and that of enhancing their employability, are not in conflict. In fact, strategies to accomplish these objectives may actually complement each other. In a recent study, Barryman and Bailey (1992) propose that there is complementarity between the teaching of new cognitive skills needed by a changing workplace, and the development of effective teaching and learning pedagogies in the classroom. The new economy is driven by the globalization of production, product competition, shorter product cycles, and rapid technological change. Firms have responded to this environment by reacting much more quickly to market demands and by adopting flexible production methods. The new workplace requires a higher level of knowledge, of applying such knowledge to different contexts, and of learning to integrate new technologies in shorter periods of time.

In this context, the higher educational system can no longer afford to offer a two-track curriculum, one for college-bound students that emphasizes higher level cognitive and behavioral skills, and another track for lower achieving students that offers low level Taylor-like skills for the factory or unskilled worker. Low-skill-level jobs have declined significantly in the US today, and even entry-level jobs require a much higher level of skills than those required just a decade ago. Recognizing this reality, new pedagogies call for engaging students in problem-solving and real-world intellectual challenges. Community colleges are in an ideal position to respond to the demands imposed by the changing workplace. According to the 1995 report by the National Center for Educational Statistics, 45% of all full-time freshmen are enrolled

in community colleges, along with almost 47% of all minority enrolled in higher education. By adopting new pedagogies that emphasized real-world problem-solving, and that are more in tune with current demands of the work place community colleges could have a tremendous impact on the education and training of disadvantaged populations, and of all other students for that matter. Moreover, findings from a recent study on English language learners, and on the impact of the school-to-career programs concluded that new pedagogies based on contextual and project-based learning provided students an opportunity to "foster language development" and to enhance their employment opportunities at the same time. (Allen, Di Bona, and Reilly, 1998).

In this study, we focus on the role of community colleges and universities in serving Hispanics, a group with a large proportion of economically and socially disadvantaged workers who face unique problems when entering the labor force or seeking workplace advancement. According to the 1997 Index of Hispanic Economic Indicators in 1995 only 53.4% of Hispanics had graduated from High School, compared to 83% of Whites and 73.8% of African Americans and fewer than one in ten (9.3%) had college degrees. The same report indicates that "in terms of poverty levels, Hispanics are economically worse off that they were five years ago during the height of the recession," and that about one in three Hispanics were poor. We conducted an assessment and collected data on four demonstration projects funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.[1] These projects were developed by the DOL in collaboration with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). The projects aimed to create or promote innovative strategies and approaches for community colleges and universities to provide training and employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged Hispanics. These four programs targeted individuals of Hispanic origin eligible for programs authorized by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). The JTPA programs served youth, adults, and dislocated workers who experienced barriers to training or stable long-term employment. The demonstration programs receiving the awards targeted barriers reflective of cultural, social, and economic environment in the workplace or in the educational system.

The question of whether community colleges and universities can adequately serve disadvantaged Hispanics is of particular relevance in the context of the recently enacted workforce development legislation. After many years of studies and negotiations (Meléndez, 1997), Congress finally enacted, and President Clinton signed, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. This legislation replaces the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and consolidates other employment and training laws under one act. Among other things, the WIA emphasizes the role that community colleges and other educational institutions play in the workforce development system. But it also establishes clear performance criteria for training providers, and mandates that performance data are readily available to clients through one-stop centers and other

[1] An assessment, in this context, consists of a review and interpretation of the evidence following a case study method. We used multiple data sources including interviews, group discussions, analysis of program documents, quantitative indicators, and others. An assessment is not a research strategy similar or comparable to formal program evaluations of demonstration projects where experimental designs are followed and program impacts on participants are carefully monitored.

outlets. These developments are particularly relevant to Hispanics. Although JTPA evaluations found positive and strong employment impacts on disadvantaged populations as a whole (Orr et al., 1994), the historical results for Hispanics have been relatively poor (Meléndez 1989; Romero, 1990). As a group, Hispanics have a relatively low job placement rate at program completion and, subsequently, relatively low average wages in comparison to their peers who were placed in jobs. Rodriguez and Martinez (1995) found similar inequities when assessing outcomes in the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program, formerly offered by the Assistance to Families with Dependable Children (AFDC) program.

In conducting this study, our main objectives was to understand and document the factors that contribute to the development of effective strategies to support the success of community college-based employment training and educational programs for disadvantaged Hispanics. In particular, we were interested in examining four interrelated areas identified in the literature as contributing to the success of programs targeting disadvantaged populations: case management, financial aid, and support services; curriculum, instructional practices, and academic support; program design and institutional environment; and, links to employers and local industry. A successful program does not need to have a strong emphasis on or allocation of resources in all four areas. Indeed, a successful program may only focus on one of these four areas and excel in fulfilling its mission. But we have found that most successful programs have developed each of these programmatic areas to some degree and have assigned and prioritized resources in two or more of them depending on other existing resources and support programs available to students.

The Employment and Training Administration, the administrative agency for the demonstration grant, awarded grants to four programs:

1. The Hispanic Network for Education and Training of the Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute (ATVI) of New Mexico. This project created a network of comprehensive services to support Hispanic students' success in completing an associate's degree or certificate program leading to employment. Services included orientation, counseling, peer mentoring, diagnostic testing, job and life skill courses, and emergency financial aid. Among the students serviced by this program were single parents, GED candidates, as well as former inmates on parole.
2. The Better Opportunities for Hispanics Program of the Miami Dade Community College, Homestead Campus (MDCC) of Florida. This program combines a traditional educational approach with non-traditional self-development activities to provide students with a variety of educational resources that enhance the learning process. The program offered retraining for displaced agricultural workers affected by economic stagnation caused by Hurricane Andrew. The program featured training in office management, office support, and airline ticket sales in response to the job opportunities created by the expansion of the Miami International Airport to South Dade County.
3. The Direct Care Workers Program at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) in New York. This program offered a formalized, bilingual,

context-based, vocational paraprofessional training in the area of direct care of developmentally disabled and mentally retarded clients. The program, which integrates classroom training with practical experience gained at the job site, included financial and academic assistance, an internship in a community residence or treatment agency, ongoing supervision, and career support services. The program also combines language skill development with job-specific training, and responds to the need for bilingual direct care workers in the field.

4. The Accelerated Associate's Program for Licensed Nurses of the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico (IUPR). This program offers licensed practical nurses (LPNs), a group that experiences difficulty moving up from the entry level in the nursing profession, an associate's degree that can be completed in one year. Courses are offered in three trimesters and two summer sessions. The program offers financial and academic assistance, and also allows students to take placement exams in areas covered as part of their practical nursing training in order to reduce the time spent in the classroom.

A detailed case study for each of these programs is presented in the middle section of the report. To facilitate the interpretation of our findings, we have organized the discussion of the cases following the conceptual guidelines outlined in the next section, in which we summarize findings from a review of the literature. After the case studies are presented, we discuss the elements that define best practice for universities or community colleges educational training programs. Successful programs serving the disadvantaged, particularly those serving disadvantaged Hispanics, have strong case management and academic support components. These programs often are "dedicated" programs serving communities with high concentration of Hispanics, and offering flexible formats to accommodate the busy schedules of working parents. In a few instances, programs serving Hispanics also offer strong connections to industry. Taken as a group, the cases presented here share these characteristics and define alternative models for supporting disadvantaged Hispanics in terms of acquiring skills and developing access to jobs.

Reinventing Community Colleges and Innovations in University Systems

Developing Criteria for a Cross-Site Analysis

Community colleges are under tremendous political and social pressures. To begin with, politicians, community leaders, and educators are constantly questioning the appropriate role and mission of community colleges.[2] Some would like them to be more cost-effective, while others would like them to serve a larger number of the adult high-school-dropout population. Educators question the relevance of current instructional practices at community colleges, while industry questions the relevance of the curriculum and the job readiness of community college students when they enter the labor force. Often these pressures are appropriate, but they also pull institutions in different directions. Hispanics, like many other groups, would like community colleges to be more responsive to meeting their educational needs and to enhancing their employment opportunities.

From the perspective of a state-sponsored or private university system, the declining numbers of traditional college-age students, and the re-entry to the educational system of non-traditional students present similar challenges. Beyond the needs to keep enrollments stable and maintain operations at a certain level, universities confront the necessity of adapting programs and teaching strategies to serve an increasingly large number of non-traditional students. These students have a different set of problems and needs than those often experienced by a traditional student body. Non-traditional and disadvantaged students often have to balance work and family responsibilities with academic demands, and usually begin their new educational experience with significant deficiencies in core academic skills. For non-traditional students, then, adapting to the challenges of continuing education and training is an arduous process that requires an effective support system.

The objective of this section is to specify criteria that will allow us to establish the main elements for the success of programs that serve the education and training needs of disadvantaged Hispanic students and improve their employability. Based on the growing literature[3] on effective or best practices in employment training programs and community colleges serving the disadvantaged, we have established four areas of inquiry for this cross-site comparative analysis:

- First, effective programs provide strong case management[4] to assist or link students with counseling, financial aid sources and social services (Creason, 1994; Kangas, 1994). Disadvantaged Hispanics need to overcome multiple

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[2] For a summary of the history on the debate regarding the appropriate role of community colleges see Brint and Karabel (1989).

[3] See for example Giloth (1998), Harrison and Weiss (1998), Joyner (1996), Grubb (1996), Moscovitch (1997), Meléndez (1996), Morales (1998), Orr (1994), Stokes (1996), U.S. Department of Labor (1995).

[4] We define case management as that part of program staff (counselors, coordinators, etc.) dedicated to monitor students' progress, facilitate access to services, and provide assistance in problem-solving to allow students to complete the program successfully.

barriers when attending educational programs including low income and financial difficulties, parenting and other family responsibilities, emotional and substance abuse problems, and discrimination (Henriksen, 1995). Some of the questions that we have explored include: Did the college establish a dedicated program to serve Hispanics or did they serve them through existing, more general programs? Did they provide additional financial aid? Are counselors bilingual? Were services provided through the college, community-based organizations, or social service organizations? How were these links made?

- Second, student-focused instructional practices are essential for disadvantaged Hispanics to succeed in college. Given the educational background of disadvantaged Hispanics, many are in need of non-credit, remedial courses to be able to successfully complete college-level math and English courses. Also, given previous experiences with the educational system, integrated work and learning programs often provide the appropriate context for non-traditional students to succeed (Camacho, 1995; Jalomo, 1995; Kangas, 1994; Kraemer, 1996). In this case we posed the questions: Did the program offer these and other successful strategies such as combining English as a Second Language courses with vocational training? Did the program facilitate the creation of small peer support groups and peer mentoring? Did the program implement faculty training to promote empathetic teaching and a positive classroom experience?
- Third, student-focused program design matters. For instance, school-based programs designed to integrate certificate and degree granting instruction provide an educational continuum that allow non-traditional students to complete a college degree while earning income from work. A student-focused program design accommodates the schedule of working parents or may offer distance learning opportunities. Similarly, successful programs offer life skills and employability workshops as an integral component of the curriculum (Abbot, 1978). In assessing this aspect of the program we asked the question: Did the program design incorporate these and other successful student-focused strategies when serving the needs of disadvantaged Hispanics?
- Fourth, links to employers and local industry are important for defining skill competencies and curriculum, for providing students with internships, and for job placements. Programs that promote connections with the local labor market attract financial support, receive donations of equipment and other resources, and become part of business networks in the region. Linkages to local industry and "networking" are more effective when colleges target a particular industrial sector (Fitzgerald, 1997, 1998; Stuart and Kingslow, 1995). In this context, it was pertinent to ask the questions: Did the program promote active involvement from employers? What kind of support did they receive from local industry? How did learning and support services relate to work place experiences and long-term employability? How did the programs help students/participants get a job?

From a demonstration project perspective, we were also interested in ascertaining whether the programs had a broader impact within the larger institution. That is, we wanted to know if the college instituted some of the demonstrated effective practices for serving disadvantaged Hispanics, whether by continuing the program with other funding, or by adopting similar initiatives in other parts of the college.

Method and Site Visit Protocols

To answer the above questions we adopted a comparative case study method.[5] This study has combined and examined multiple sources of information, including site visits, interviews with students, instructors and other staff, the examination of program files and documents, and visits to employers and other collaborators. The data was collected between September of 1997 and June of 1998 and thus may not be reflect more recent developments. Based on these data sources, the study provides an assessment of program design and implementation during the period covered by the U.S. Department of Labor grant, and draws some lessons for other programs serving disadvantaged Hispanics.

Our initial tasks were to conduct a literature review on the subject, to design site visit protocols, and to coordinate site visits with grantees. Most of this work was completed by early August 1997, before we conducted site visits. Working with the background information provided by the Office of Employment and Training Programs, we then contacted potential interviewees including project directors and other staff, faculty, students, and others. When appropriate, we conducted visits to employers and internship sites for the students served by the programs, or met with groups of students. All site visits were completed by the end of June 1998.

The site visit protocol was designed to collect first-hand information on the implementation of the HACU Demonstration Grant programs. In our field interviews and in the collection of relevant documents, we sought to establish a baseline of information related to our key areas of inquiry:

- Case management, financial aid and other support services that aims to help students overcome social barriers;
- Instructional practices, curriculum, and academic support that facilitates student achievement;
- Program design and the institutional context that facilitates students' academic progress and improves graduation rates; and,
- Links to industry and the local labor market.

Based on the review of the literature, we concluded that these are areas generally associated with best practices in the employment-training field and servicing Hispanics in colleges and university systems. In addition to collecting relevant documentation, the fieldwork documents the experience and viewpoints of students, staff,

5 The comparative case study is the preferred research method employed by researchers conducting assessment studies of programs' effectiveness. This method can be particularly useful when assessing the design of employment training programs and workforce development systems. For an introduction to this method see for example Yin (1984). For examples of applied research in this field see Fitzgerald (1998), Fitzgerald and Jenkins (1997), Joyner (1966), Harrison and Weiss (1998), Meléndez (1966), Meléndez and Harrison (1998), Molina (1998), Seavey (1998), Stuart and Kingslow (1995), Siegel and Kwas (1995), and Stokes (1966).

and faculty involved with the program. Interviews were scheduled by phone and confirmed by a follow-up letter. Meetings with key informants (program director, staff, faculty and students) were prearranged to the extent possible. We also allocated extra time in order to conduct additional interviews with other informants, as suggested by those more directly involved with the program. In all cases we interviewed program directors, program coordinators, instructors, and students. On average we met four instructors, and five students per site. In the cases of the IUPR, and the ATVI we also conducted student focus groups. The focus groups allowed students to speak freely, and to bounce their ideas and comments off their peers. At BMCC and ATVI, given the particular nature of their programs, we met with all program counselors, at BMCC we met with the Dean and the Director of Adult and Continuing Education, and at MDCC we also met the president of the Homestead campus.

Table I: Individuals Interviewed

Program	Director	Coordinator	Instructors	Counselors	Students	Other Administrators
IUPR	1	1	7		Focus group + 2	Dir Nursing School
BMCC	1	(Job Developer) 1	2		Work site visit 1 4	Dean Continuing Ed Dir Adult Education Dir of Stud Services
MDCC	1	1	1	(Prog. Direct)	9	College President
ATVI	1	(Peer Coord) 1	1	2	Focus group + 4	Grant Manager

Interviews were intended to be informal discussions. Protocol questions that were developed for each site, (included in Appendix I) were intended primarily as a guide to open-ended discussion, so that those interviewed could freely express their experiences and views about the program. Documents collected during our site visits, in conjunction to the programs' reports already in our possession, were used to complement the information compiled during interviews. The data collected through interviews and documents constituted the basis for the data analysis. This analysis was organized in a case-study format for each of the sites, and structured to follow the four analytical areas outlined above.

Another critical area of this study was the development of criteria to measure program success. Since each program approached the issues of education and training for disadvantaged Hispanic population from different perspective, the relative success of each program was discussed in terms of their specific mission, program's designed, and purpose. These different criteria are described in more detail in Appendix I, however, in general terms our approach can be outlined as follows:

- Inter-American University of Puerto Rico. This accelerated trimester pro-

gram was founded on the premise that LPNs have practical experience that can be credited by the university. This design allows LPN students to complete a year-long associate's degree program that prepares them to take and pass the RN boards. While the actual success of the program can be measured by considering the number of students who graduate, pass the board exam and obtain employment as working RNs, we also wanted to determine how the program responded to the needs of returning adult students.

- Borough of Manhattan Community College. This 6-month long bilingual vocational training offered a curriculum that integrates English language-acquisition and job-specific training in the area of direct care for disabled patients. The program was founded on the premise that current demand for bilingual staff in this area can ease workers' transition from the manufacturing sector into the now expanding professional health care service sector. We measured program success in terms of the number of students who graduated, and obtained employment in the field upon graduation.
- Miami-Dade Community College. This program was designed to provide disadvantaged Hispanic students with the academic, economic, and administrative support necessary for them to develop English proficiency and job-related training. The program combined traditional or formal training practices with non-traditional self-development activities (such as life-skills workshops) in a "client-driven" approach. The year-long program was not designed to support students through their college career but instead to offer assistance in those areas most needed by participants. Success for this program was measured in terms of students' retention for those enrolled in associate's degree programs, and in terms of employment rates for those enrolled in certificate courses.
- The Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute. This program was designed to ease the transition into college or the work place for disadvantaged Hispanics. The program provided assistance developing social, academic, and employment skills through counseling and peer mentoring. The aim of the program was to increase the retention rates of disadvantage Hispanic students enrolled at the institute, and by extension, to also increase their employability. The actual success of the program was measured by considering the retention rate for the target population.

It is apparent from the above synopses of the programs' key characteristics that each of the cases included in the DOL demonstration project has a unique program design. Table II summarizes program structures previously described. For comparison purposes we have included six dimensions of program structure: Financial Aid, Academic Support, Case Management and Counseling, Specialized Curriculum, Administrative Innovations, and Links to Jobs and Employers.

Table II: Program Structure

	IUPR	BMCC	MDCC	ATVI
Financial Aid	Based on need	Full assistance	Full assistance	Ongoing emergency financial aid
Academic Support	Tutorial services and Board exam review sessions	Tutorial services and classroom discussions	Tutorial services and workshops	Tutors and Peer Mentors
Case Management Counseling	Responsibility of Program Coordinator	Integrated to program	By Program Director and by school counselor	Primary service offered by program
Specialized Curriculum	Accelerated trimester system	Package of Certifications	Life & Job Skills added to regular curriculum	Not part of program design
Administrative Innovation	Problem-solving by Administration Team	Self-contained structure	Program mediates relation to other progs. w/in college	Centralized Support System
Links to Jobs and Employers	Present as in-hospital practices	Strong through internships and part of exit step	Not part of program design	Not part of program design

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Models for Supporting Hispanic Success

Each of the four programs and models studied is unique. They were designed to respond to the needs of the Hispanic community in a particular context, target a specific group of disadvantaged workers, and integrate them into other programs within the hosting college or university through a variety of institutional arrangements. Perhaps the strength of each of the case studies springs from their sui generis nature: they were specifically designed to address the unique needs of the targeted population. Nevertheless, the programs share a number of characteristics that make them effective in servicing Hispanics. The objective of this section is to illustrate the contrasting approaches and lessons learned from these programmatic experiences. The main findings are aligned along the four content areas of inquiry detailed in the previous section.

Case Management

The key commonality among the programs is that each had a strong case management component yet offered case management services in relatively different ways. The programs at MDCC and ATVI were primarily designed to support students enrolled in existing programs in the college. Nonetheless, MDCC created a dedicated program providing its own counseling services and promoting the fostering of a group identity for its participants. In contrast, ATVI relied on staff from existing programs and focused on linking individual students to appropriate academic or social support services on a case-by-case basis.

The IUPR and BMCC programs were dedicated certification or degree programs that targeted disadvantaged Hispanics. These programs integrated case management, counseling services, financial aid, and other support services into their work. Both programs targeted and developed strong links to the health care industry. However, the focus of BMCC's bilingual vocational training was to provide a pathway to the industry for a population disconnected from work. In contrast, the IUPR program for upgrading licensed practical nurses provided a career ladder for those already connected to the industry but in need of further credentials required for promotion.

Regardless of the particular structure of the case management component, students benefited from the assistance of a designated person or persons responsible for mediating their interactions with the college. Each of the four programs provided individual and academic counseling and coordinated other social and academic support services for their students. They also offered a variety of group-based life skills workshops to program participants. These sessions created a safe environment for students to learn about existing resources within the program network and throughout the college, discuss common problems, and design strategies to deal with individual problems. Such student-focused support systems seemed to be critical for generating student satisfaction with their programs and in fostering their subsequent success in college.

Another important finding was that those programs that created student support groups and fostered a sense of group identity were more effective in helping students mediate their multiple social and academic problems. Whether the programs were

structured as dedicated, self-contained and relatively isolated from the rest of the college (as in the BMCC case and, to some extent, the IUPR case) or were more dependent on regular class offerings and existing programs (as in the ATVI and MDCC cases), student participation in regular group activities created a sense of "belonging". For Hispanic students, shared ethnicity played an important role in reinforcing group identity in relation to the rest of the student body and college. Students used group identity as a support mechanism to learn from each other and solve day-to-day problems.

It is very difficult to attribute exact causality to the different outcomes being examined in a qualitative study like this one. However, there is no ambivalence with regard to the positive role that strong case management played in the success of the programs studied. Similarly, it is hard to determine whether individual case management by dedicated staff was more or less important than group activities and group solidarity among students. Both factors seemed to complement each other and be an important aspect of program success.

Instructional Practices, Curriculum, and Academic Support

A second common element among the demonstration projects was the provision of academic tutors and, in some cases, student (or peer) mentors. Academic support played a mayor role in the success of student in getting their courses approved and in finishing their programs. As explained earlier, the typical student could not have taken college-level courses without first taking non-credit remedial courses. If a student did take regular college-level courses, continuous academic support would have been necessary for successful course completion.

The demonstration projects provided academic support in relatively different ways. In addition to tutors and/or peer mentors, the IUPR and BMCC programs recruited faculty to teach special sections or labs where students could discuss the materials presented in class in an informal setting. Students reported that these sections were extremely helpful in helping them better understand the material and, in many instances, in creating a more positive learning environment. Students felt more confident about asking questions and were able to develop personal relationships with their instructors.

It should be noted that few of these special sections were structured into the programs. Often, they were organized informally by individual instructors as the need arose or as requested by students. Not all professors took this initiative or demonstrated such empathy for their students. However, in the two dedicated and self-contained programs, most instructors offered labs or review sessions in the course of the program. In addition, they often provided handouts summarizing the most important points of a lecture and distributed other supplementary material to students. Some professors also organized small group discussions during regular class time and practiced other student-focused techniques that facilitated the learning process. The professors who were most effective in these programs were those with a philosophical predisposition to and prior experience in teaching disadvantaged students. Very rarely did the other programs incorporate student-focused instructional practices into program design.

Curriculum design was another area in which dedicated programs at IAUPR and BMCC had an advantage over the two integration programs. The courses and

the competencies taught in the former two programs were directly related to industry expectations or state certification. In addition, the nexus between education and employability was more apparent to students in these programs. In the case of the BMCC program, the whole curriculum was designed to integrate vocational education with English as a Second Language and with other scientific concepts necessary to work in the field of health care for the mentally and physically disabled.

To summarize, programs servicing the disadvantaged are more successful when they offer strong academic support system for students, when they incorporate student-focused instructional practices, when they develop curriculum in accord with industry expectations, and when they encourage faculty to take a proactive role in student mentoring.

Program Design

In part, the unique design of each of the four programs arose from the DOL selection process that sought diversity in awarding the grants. One of the greatest contrasts in program design among the four programs was in terms of the relationship between the program and the host institution. As such, this study compared two programs that had a "dedicated" program design (IUPR and BMCC) with two programs with an "integration" program design (MDCC and ATVI).[5]

Both design approaches had distinct advantages and disadvantages. For example, the two dedicated programs had more control over curriculum design and influence over faculty participation. As self-contained programs, they also had an advantage in fostering group identity and promoting solidarity among students. In addition, dedicated programs developed closer links to industry and employers.

Programs that pursued an integration strategy had an advantage over dedicated programs in terms of opening up existing college support services and offering a more diverse set of educational options to students. For example, ATVI used current college counselors to staff the Hispanic Network for Education and Training and coordinate social and academic support services for students. Because these counselors were housed in the central facilities for student support services, the coordination of counseling, financial aid, monitoring of student tutors, and other support services was greatly facilitated.

In addition, the MDCC experience illustrates how an integration model can be more flexible in accommodating student schedules and career choices. The MDCC

[5] The term "dedicated" is used to denote a program that is self-contained, where curriculum is designed to satisfy a particular certification or academic degree, and the students take classes as a group. In the two dedicated cases in this study, students received social and academic support as a component of their affiliation with the program. In contrast, the term "integration" is used to denote a program that supports students who are enrolled in existing college programs. These students receive academic support depending on the particular subject in which they are enrolled. Counseling and other social support services are primarily offered through the college student support system. In short, the main objective of these programs is to help students to take advantage of existing services and to succeed in established college programs.

program took advantage of the existing college certification program with about one-third of the participating students opting for the Airline Ticketing, Office Administration, or Child Development certification courses. These 10 to 12 college-credit certificate program options had direct connections to industry that provided financial assistance, internships, and job opportunities. The credits earned in these courses could be applied toward an associate's degree in Business Administration or Education. An added advantage to program participants was that the state of Florida regulates the transfer of credits and program requirements to ease the transfer of courses from one college to another. The universalization of college credits is particularly beneficial to students who face the multiple barriers to finishing college, those who require flexible schedules, and those who relocate often—common concerns for disadvantaged Hispanics. The MDCC system offered flexibility and the Better Opportunities program made it an integral part of program design.

The dedicated program model also presented a number of design innovations. For example, both the IUPR and the BMCC programs offered some continuing educational opportunities. The BMCC program awarded college certification for four of the classes needed for graduation and also granted three college credits that could be applied towards an associate's degree in Human Services. The IUPR program was designed so that core courses were similar to those required for a bachelor's degree. Another example of program innovation was the adaptation of the accelerated schedule and trimester option in the IUPR program. The year-round and 10-week trimester format allowed students to complete the standard two-year degree in only one year. However, this design was overly ambitious so administrators eventually extended courses for an additional trimester. In the end, the required time to complete the program was still substantially reduced. In conjunction with the block scheduling of classes (either early morning or mid-afternoon) to accommodate working students, this design enabled working nurses aides, most of them with family responsibilities, to participate in and finish the program.

The dedicated program design also had an advantage in promoting the integration of support services, providing academic support, and in offering a work-oriented education. In both the IUPR and the BMCC programs, the scheduling of classes and workshops for the whole group of participants allowed for more interactions among counselors, instructors, and program staff. In the case of BMCC, the staff formed a program team that met regularly to discuss student needs and progress. As a result, the staff frequently solved problems before they became intractable. For example, even in instances when counseling and job-placement responsibilities clearly belonged to specific team members, all team members shared in advising students, establishing contacts with employers, or in teaching the employability and life skills workshops.

Each demonstration project was designed to benefit participating students and promote their success in the program. Although the programs featured different designs, they all focused squarely on student needs. The clear lesson for program design is that student-focused strategies are important to success. Designing accommodating schedules, encouraging staff to work as a team and to be aware of the multiple barriers to student progress, and pursuing flexibility in accepting credit transfers are important components of program design that have a cumulative effect on student success.

Links to Industry and Employers

The range and depth of activities linking the four demonstration programs to employers and industry varied greatly. Program activities ranged from a concerted effort to promote linkages as a central part of program design to a minimum programmatic effort that included only a few workshops on employment topics. All programs included workshops on workplace norms and behavior and taught employability skills, such as how to search for jobs. The two dedicated programs, the IUPR and the BMCC, structured internships as part of their program requirements. For example, the BMCC program required the completion of 126 hours at a work site internship while IUPR students conducted practices at local hospitals. In addition, the BMCC program provided ongoing career support services for graduates.

Connections to employers helped these two programs in other ways. Program staff at BMCC consulted with employers and staff of in-patient health care facilities on curriculum content and design. This collaboration helped BMCC develop certified industry-standard skill competencies. Instructors at IUPR had extensive experience working in hospitals and supervising certified nurses. These relationships were extremely useful for placing students in permanent jobs. Some students were hired by the institutions where they conducted their internships while others received job referrals from these contacts.

In contrast to direct industry linkages developed by the dedicated programs, the programs following an integration model relied on contacts made by other college programs to establish links to local industry. This system worked relatively well for those students enrolled in programs that had existing linkages, such as the Airline Ticketing certificate program at MDCC. However, in reality, the other two certificate programs at MDCC did not prioritize job placement and only offered a minimal level of employment-focused activities.

In short, continuous and extensive relations with employers and industry provided numerous benefits to students. Employer participation in curriculum design insured that course content was in alignment with industry standards and focused on the competencies most in demand by the local job market. The students who participated in internships gained valuable learning experiences that helped them relate classroom learning to the work world. The transition of students to permanent employment was greatly aided by program efforts to build bridges to industry and employers.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to determine the key factors that contribute to the academic success of disadvantaged Hispanics students in community colleges. The assessment was conducted based on the Department of Labor's ultimate goal of enhancing the employability of this target population. At the most general level, the overall response of the participating colleges to the problem of Hispanic unemployment and to the urgent need to provide this population with quality educational opportunities was encouraging. In all the cases, the DOL grant built upon well-established programs or programs that had recently begun operations. Dedicated staff and faculty responded quickly to the DOL request for project proposals with all programs starting operations within a few weeks of award notification.

The four programs reviewed in the study placed a strong emphasis on case management and counseling, provided academic tutors and peer mentors, and formed formal or informal support groups among students. This package of services and strategies constituted a common core of all the programs. In complement to the findings of previous survey-data studies (Creason, 1994) and program-focused case study research (Kangas, 1994), this study found the combination of counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and networking services to be a major positive influence in helping Hispanic students achieve success. Success was measured primarily by students completion of the program.

The overall conclusion of this study is that programs designed to support disadvantaged Hispanics should, at a minimum, offer a comprehensive package of support services including proactive case management, counseling, and tutoring in basic academic subjects. Programs should also encourage and assist students to form support networks within the college.

The colleges participating in the demonstration project designed somewhat different strategies to provide additional support to disadvantaged Hispanics. The two main approaches used by the participating demonstration projects were the integration approach and the dedicated-service approach. The integration strategy supported students participating in existing, mainstream programs within the college. The greatest advantages of this strategy were that students had access to a diverse set of programs and that the support services designed to serve the needs of disadvantaged Hispanics could be more easily institutionalized after the completion of the DOL demonstration program. These advantages have important implications. Access to diverse career programs discourages the tracking of disadvantaged Hispanic students into programs that might be in low demand by industry. Tracking occurs when a disproportionate number of students are clustered into particular programs within the college. Tracking within the college could be a significant barrier for the long-term employability of Hispanics. The integration or main streaming approach offers disadvantaged Hispanics the opportunity to enroll in "hot" programs. Generally, "hot" programs are those programs whose graduates find employment in their chosen career track within 30 days of program completing. Typically these students find more internships, are offered better

salaries, and get more advancement opportunities than those who chose other occupations requiring similar training or education.

Equally important is the potential of integration or main streaming programs to become part of standard college operations after grant funding has ended. In both cases where the main streaming strategy was implemented, the college administration intended to continue offering the targeted package of support services to Hispanic students. In contrast, the continuation of the dedicated program at BMCC was contingent upon additional funding. However, the IUPR program was added to the regular programs offered by the nursing school. From this perspective, the demonstration project was a complete success.

The most evident weakness of the integration strategy was that both program design and instructional practices were of secondary importance to the program. The MDCC design offered an interesting model where the advantages of an integration strategy were combined with steering students to certification programs already established within the college. These certification programs offered advantages similar to the dedicated programs regarding connections to employers and industry. However, only a fraction of the Hispanic students participating in the MDCC program chose to enroll in these certification courses. Another weakness of the integration or main streaming approach was the relatively poor development of group identity and networking among students. Dedicated programs encouraged group formation, generated the creation of support networks, and created a sense of "belonging" in the college for Hispanic students.

Students in dedicated programs spent a significant amount of time engaging in daily activities collectively with other students. In the main streaming program, weekly or sporadic group activities were not frequent enough to facilitate academic or social connections among students. Students interviewed across all programs reported that peer support and encouragement was critical for succeeding in the program. The more cohesive the group of students, the more support they were able to provide each other. However, the greatest danger of dedicated programs is that they indirectly serve to track disadvantaged Hispanics into certain types of occupations.

A final consideration regarding the two dedicated programs included in this study is that these programs for disadvantaged Hispanics clearly articulated a career ladder within a particular industry. In the case of the IUPR program, an accessible associate's degree program was designed to serve displaced or underemployed practical nurses. This accelerated program option represents an extraordinary effort from a large university system to open its doors to a non-traditional student population. In the case of the BMCC program, the college created a career ladder by developing a six-month training program at a typical two-year educational institution. In both of these cases, course work completed during the program could count towards an advanced degree--a bachelor's degree at IUPR and an associate's degree in Human Services at BMCC. In addition, these two cases are examples of programs where the traditional demarcations between vocational skills, training, and education have been eased by the creation of a more effective professional development continuum.

This study clearly demonstrates that both the integration and the dedicated

program strategies have advantages and disadvantages. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each approach is important for the design of effective programs servicing disadvantaged Hispanics students. Beyond this distinction, there are a number of other important factors to consider in the design of successful programs. Instructional practices and connections to industry are important programmatic areas in designing community college programs that target the disadvantaged. As previously explained, some colleges in this study carefully incorporated these two concerns into their programs. In general, however, the emphasis on new instructional practices and connection to industry was not as strong as the emphasis on case management, counseling, and academic support. As Henriksen (1995) has pointed out, only a small fraction of Hispanics (12%) attending community colleges transfer to a four-year college (compared to 23% of White students). Hence, for disadvantaged Hispanics to benefit, the emphasis in a technical program must be in defining a career path and in establishing connections to industry. In innovative programs, a six-month or one-year certification can provide the first steps towards an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Recent studies on the college experience of Hispanics indicate that teaching methods and other instructional practices are critical factors for success (Camacho, 1995; Jalomo, 1995; Kraemer, 1996). However, most community college programs designed to assist the disadvantaged place more emphasis on counseling and tutoring (what happens outside the classroom) than on instructional practices (what happens inside the classroom). In doing so, program designers assume that the success of Hispanic students depends primarily on the student preparedness and responsibility. This approach minimizes the importance of the institutional context and pedagogical practices along with the responsibility of faculty and other staff. Pedagogy is left to the instructors with minimal institutional scrutiny of their effectiveness as such. The classroom becomes a "black-box" into which administrators and planners alike are reluctant to look.

In contrast to this pattern, this study found that good teaching matters to student success. When asked to identify a significant positive influence in their college experience, students universally acknowledged good teachers and engaging learning experiences. In one program, students found math and accounting to be "easy" and "fun" subjects. These so-called hard courses worked better for students when they were taught in an applied context, often as part of a specific skill competency. Most students reported working harder in courses in which they felt engaged. However, a recent study by Perin (1998) reports that faculty resistance remains one of the main obstacles to the integration of academic and occupational education.

Policy Recommendations

Several policy recommendations follow from this analysis of four case studies and the workforce development principles derived from effective programs servicing disadvantaged Hispanics.

1. Offer comprehensive case management. Colleges designing programs for disadvantaged Hispanic students should include comprehensive case management that takes into account the multiple barriers affecting the academic success of disadvantaged populations. These strategies should also consider the strengths that Hispanics bring

to their college experience, such as group identity and ethnic solidarity. For a disadvantaged Hispanic student, other students who have faced or are facing similar challenges often provide the best support system. Students share experiences that point to strategies and resources for problem solving. Students who form study groups can also strategize about how to succeed in classes. Group-based exchanges also give students a sense of institutional belonging.

2. Promote student-focused instructional practice. It is imperative that colleges designing programs for disadvantaged Hispanics focus their attention on improving instructional practice and promoting student-focused pedagogues. A well-trained instructor uses culturally and socially relevant methods as well as active learning techniques. Good teachers have learned how to engage students in projects and workplace internships that promote active learning. While committed teachers are constantly searching for new methods and approaches to engage students, teachers often learn best from the experiences of other teachers. Therefore, teacher collaboration and training in team building should be encouraged. Good teachers are engaged in active mentoring of students and look at their learning experience as a multi-dimensional process that is affected by social, non-academic factors. Teachers associations can provide a measure of leadership by encouraging members to utilize successfully demonstrated student-focused instructional practices. It is, however, the role of the administration to promote practices that enhance learning at their institutions. In addition to facilitating the systematization of instructional best practices among faculty at their institution, administrators can also promote on-going professional development by organizing faculty study groups and inviting experts in the field of student-focused instructional practices to give seminars. Colleges can organize discussions, workshops, seminars, and on-going professional development series that focus on current developments in those fields they are interested in developing or revamping.

3. Training programs should be student-friendly. Community colleges should design programs that accommodate the time constraints and learning styles of disadvantaged Hispanics. Dedicated programs seem to provide a more encouraging learning environment for disadvantaged Hispanics. These programs make students feel welcome at the institution, encourage the formation of peer support groups, and promote student engagement in their studies. Instruction in these programs is designed to facilitate attendance and to accommodate time constraints due to work and parental responsibilities. Class participation encourages active learning in what students perceive to be a safe environment. Dedicated programs also encourage faculty to be more involved in counseling, mentoring, and in promoting relations with industry. Echoing Grubb (1996), this study supports the view that short-term training should be a step forward for students to achieve a college degree. Whether competencies are achieved through approved courses or are learned in a community-based organization or a community college, all training should offer the opportunity of being credited towards a certification and all certifications should be articulated to a college degree. In this framework, the connection between learning and work is direct and clear: programs concatenate and build upon each other to

create an educational continuum. Finally, contextual and vocational ESL should be an integral program component to meet the needs of students with limited English-language proficiency.

4. Keep eyes on the prize: Create links to industry and employers. Community colleges with strong connections to employers enhance student learning and employment opportunities. In these colleges, curriculum and resources are more synchronized to technological change and the skills demanded by industry. Like the work of Fitzgerald and Jenkins (1997) and Stuart and Kingslow (1995), this study supports the view that community college-based technical training programs are more effective when they are closely linked to employers and industry.

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Case Studies

The Hispanic Network for Education and Training of the Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute

Bilingual Vocational Training as a Pathway to Industry: The Direct Care Worker Program of the Borough of Manhattan Community College

Creating Career Ladders in University Systems: The Accelerated Associate's Degree Program for Unemployed Licensed Nurses at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico

A Focus on Students: The Better Opportunities for Disadvantaged Hispanics Program of the Miami-Dade Community College

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